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ABSTRACT

This monograph examines efforts and progress that have been made in the universalization of primary education in Bangladesh and suggests factors that have impeded the successful achievement of universal primary education (UPE). The first portion of the report presents the historical context of the plan for achieving UPE. Separate sections outline the historical background of UPE in developing countries; the justification for UPE; efforts to achieve UPE during the Pakistan period, 1947-1970; the impact of disparities in primary education on the new nation of Bangladesh. A second portion of the report looks at efforts to achieve UPE since the founding of Bangladesh. Separate sections focus on the emegence of Bangladesh and early efforts at achieving UPE; efforts in UPE since 1972; educational planning and primary education; and progress towards UPE. A third portion of the report presents factors working against the achievement of UPE. It discusses inefficiency in schooling; qualitative aspects of UPE; the problem of inequality in educational planning; and an explanation for the failure to reach the goal of UPE. A final portion of the publication considers goals for the future: recommendations for what can be done; and a consideration of what reform in education can achieve in terms of socioeconomic equality. (LP)

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Efforts in Universalization of Primary Education The Case of Bangladesh

Kowsar P. Chowdhury

occasional papers series

COMPARATIVE EDUCATION CENTER

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO

EFFORTS IN UNIVERSALIZATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION:

THE CASE OF BANGLADESH*

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FOREWARD

This Occasional Paper, the 12th in our series, deals with one of the most important educational debates in the Third World-- the impact of primary education on development, on equity, and on literacy. This case study considers the experience of Bangladesh, where Universal Primary Education has been a major issue. In Bangladesh, the results have been mixed. This thoughtful analysis points to some of the reasons for the current situation and raises important questions concerning the process of UPE in Bangladesh and in other Third World nations. With the massive expenditures and great expectations that have gone into the UPE ideal, a careful examination of the situation in an important Third World nation is quite useful. There is little question that no panacea for "development" exists and that the various emphases of the past several decades, including non-formal education, UPE and in an earlier era, higher education and "institution building" will not provide easy solutions to very complex problems. Further, schools cannot solve problems created by social inequality, poor distribution of resources and an unwillingness of those in power to implement sometimes far-reaching social reforms.

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The Comparative Education Center is pleased to publish this paper as a part of its research and service activities. The Center serves the Faculty of Educational Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo.

Philip G. Altbach
Director
Comparative Education Center

INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, Universal Primary Education (UPE) has long been a stated goal. Since the pre-independence period until recently the goal of UPE had been reiterated on many occasions by national leaders. It has also been documented in the constitution of the country, in the developmental plans and in the reports of the Education Commissions. The Pakistan Education Commission report of 1959, recommended the achievement of UPE by 1970 for the age group 6-11 and by 1975 also for the age group 11-15. In the Third Five-Year Plan of Pakistan (1965-70), 1980 was set as a more realistic target date.

After Bangladesh became independent from Pakistan in 1971, it set up an Education Commission in 1974 which again recommended that free primary education up to class V should be made universal by 1980 and that eight years primary education should be made universal by 1983.[1] However, by 1980 the government still had not achieved UPE. Not only had the enrollment target not been materialized, but, if one considers the quality of education provided, one finds that little progress had been made in maintaining or improving the quality of primary education. Furthermore, as this study will show, the broad goals of education, such as socio-economic equality, remain as myth.

The question which therefore arises is why efforts at achieving UPE by 1980 failed. The purposes of this monograph are: i) To examine efforts and progress that have been made in the universalization of primary education

in Bangladesh; and ii) to suggest the factors that have impeded the successful achievement of the target by 1980.

This kind of analysis is likely to be very complex because education in any society is vitally interrelated with social, economic, political and cultural factors. Therefore, it might be difficult to isolate any particular factor which was mainly responsible for the success or failure of any plan for UPE. However, the achievement of the goal of UPE was largely impeded by educational strategy itself which Bangladesh, like other Third World countries, has followed and which was quite contrary to the initially expressed intentions. In fact, almost all the countries of the Third World without exception shifted their emphases to secondary and higher levels of education and expanded the enrollments at these levels at a much faster rate than at the primary level. Consequently, most of the countries by the end of the 1970s were not yet within striking distance of UPE, and Coombs predicts that at the present rate many will not achieve it by the end of this century.[2]

The following discussion on the historical background of UPE in the Third World nations traces the rational for efforts in Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh. The discussion will then turn to the educational policies during the Pakistan period (1947-71). Attention will be drawn to disparities between different levels of education and the impact which the domination of West Pakistan had on educational underdevelopment of Bangladesh, especially on primary education. Since the goal of UPE in Bangladesh was first set up during the Pakistan period, it will briefly

evaluate the efforts of the Pakistani government in UPE and examine as to how primary education was treated in relation to other levels of education in different developmental plans since 1947. This will follow by a brief socio-economic and political background of Bangladesh since its emergence in 1971. The efforts and progress toward UPE during Bangladesh period will be examined. The attitude of the government towards UPE will be inferred from analyzing and assessing the developmental plans (mainly the First Five-Year Plan of 1973-78 and also the Two-Year Plan of 1978-80) of the country to see as to how the enrollment targets were set up and how much resources were being expended in this area compare to secondary and tertiary levels of education. An attempt then will be made to assess as to why efforts by the government did not result in the realization of the primary educational goal by 1980. The concluding part of this monograph discusses the suggestions that were made by the scholars and the international organizations about how to realize educational reform and achieve UPE in order to bringing about greater socio-economic and political development in the Third World nations in general and in Bangladesh in specific. These suggestions are discussed in order to explain whether these reform measures or UPE will help in fulfilling the broad goals of education such as socio-economic equality.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

During the period of the 1950s and the 1960s when the Third World nations were designing strategies for economic, social and political

reconstruction after their colonial rule had ended, strong emphasis was placed on the role of education in national development. It has long been viewed that education in some form has an important role to play in the development of so-called "underdeveloped nations." As the World Bank report noted:

> Education was considered a major instrument for the political, social, cultural and economic modernization of the developing world in the 1950's and 1960's. Political and cultural leaders were convinced that a well supported, easily accessible educational system was an efficient means to make people socially and politically conscious, and therefore active participants in nation building and cultural progress.[3]

The pressure of modernization gave impetus not only to expand higher levels of education but also to universalization of primary education because it was believed that education provided "the key that unlocks the door to modernization."[4] Education was not only considered as essential to true independence--as the means of supplying sufficient manpower for the administration of the state and for economic development, as an ingredient of political unity, and a means of creating national consciousness, but also basic human right. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by UNESCO proclaimed education as one of the rights. Article 26 of the Declaration stated that "everyone has right to education." As a result it was felt that "Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages..."[5]

During this period the concept of "fundamental education" for all, especially in the developing countries, became a popular notion. The term was used to include a certain minimum or basic amount of education--

the barest element needed to enable the people to lead healthy, active lives. The main objective of fundamental education was to reach all sections of the community, children and adults, women as well as men.[6]

While the concepts of fundamental education and of human rights consideration complemented each other, from 1960 onwards an important new perspective on education--as an instrument of achieving economic growth and development--began to emerge. In the early 1950's, material capital was viewed as the main "missing component" of economic development. However, economists started to point out that a massive injection of capital alone into the underdeveloped countries would not necessarily lead to successful development. For this the LDCs needed a supply of skilled manpower capable of putting capital into fully productive use. Therefore, the emphasis shifted from investment in material capital only to "investment in human capital."

Education was increasingly considered an integral part of economic and social development; an essential condition for raising the standard and quality of life.

Economists considered the "human resources" of a country the most productive in terms of their contribution to the development process, observing that in the LDCs human capital constituted only about 10-15% of physical capital against 39% in the economically more developed countries.[7] This viewpoint was well explained by Harbison when he said:

> human resources...constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents

> who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources build social, economic, and political organizations, and carry forward national development.[8]

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: JUSTIFICATION FOR UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

The government of Bangladesh similarly viewed education as one of the basic human rights and indispensable for human resource development and as a strategy for economic growth. The thrust for modernization and development and the belief in education as a vital instrument in aiding in these efforts induced Bangladesh to expand not only secondary and higher levels of education but also primary education for the masses, which had long been neglected by the colonial powers. The basic beliefs in education as a vehicle for major social changes (mainly economic) further reinforced by a number of studies to which I will turn now.

Since Denison's and Schultz's reintroduction of the idea that "investment in human capital" contributed to economic growth, a large number of studies have been undertaken with a view of assessing human investment needs of particular developing countries. Most of the literature on education and "development" shows a direct relationship between education and economic growth.[9] Some comparative studies have tried to find out the relationship between education and economic progress (mainly GNP per capita) internationally (between countries, both developed and underdeveloped) at a given point of time or within countries over a period of time. Some outstanding studies in this area have been done by Bowman and Anderson,[10] Passin,[11] Peaseless,[12] and Cipola,[13] who indicated a direct correlation

between education and economic development. It was concluded that 40% adult literacy rate or 10% enrollment of the total population in primary schools was threshold for economic development.[14] From his evidence, Peaselee made it a point that the relationship between education and economic growth suggested that the former preceded and accompanied the latter. He also found out that initial emphasis on primary education more than that on secondary and higher levels of education had been associated with economic growth.

The effect of literacy or education on productivity of workers in industry in the context of developing countries is not very clear. There are not enough studies done in this field and requisite data linking literacy and education with earning and skill content of jobs are lacking in most LDCs. A case study of a factory in India suggested that more years of secondary schooling improve worker's performance and ability to learn on the job.[15] Blaug referred to some African studies which indicate that mere literacy makes little difference to the earnings of a worker in urban industry. However, better paid jobs in urban industry seem to have been invariably filled by persons with at least six years of schooling.[16]

Studies on the rate of return of schooling have been made for quite a few developing countries, such as India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, The Philippines, Nigeria, Ghana and others. In almost all cases it was found that social rates of return on schooling, particularly at the primary and secondary levels were quite high. However, the social rate of return was markedly higher for the primary level than for the

secondary level. Psacharopoulos has calculated overall social rates of return to investment in education in individual countries as a cost-weighted average of the individual rates for each educational level. He found that in the Third World countries the average return to investment in education (19.9%) was higher than the average return to physical capital (15.1%). However, in the economically developed countries, the opposite was true (returns were at the level of 8.3% and 10.5% respectively).[17] Even after taking into consideration the usually admitted limitations of rate of return analysis--that externalities and non-economic factors are ignored and that there exists quantitative and qualitative deficiencies of data in the developing countries--the results have made out a strong case for a large educational effort in these LDCs, especially at the primary level.

Based on the assumptions that education was a human right, and that it was the main "missing component" of economic development, almost all the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, including Bangladesh, had committed themselves to achieve the goal of universal primary education in the shortest possible time. To achieve this goal, these countries at one time directed their attention towards expanding and improving primary education. Many countries passed or enforced legislation to make primary education universal. "There was a keen desire to accelerate expansion and to provide a system of UPE, comparable to that of already established in the progressive countries of the world."[18]

The need for UPE was felt so urgently that UNESCO organized a series

of conferences in Karachi, Addis Ababa and Santiago in the 1960s, where all the mentioned expectations were quite strikingly reflected in the deliberations and recommendations. As it was mentioned in the case of the Karachi Plan:

> the Plan reflects the national will, both of the people and the governments of the countries concerned, to achieve free and compulsory primary education in as short as possible time. Universal primary education has long been recognized as a necessary basis for social advancement and democracy. Only recently, however, has it been realized by governments and educators that it also plays a major role in economic development...[19]

At both the Karachi and the Addis Ababa conferences a goal was set for universal primary education by 1980 for Asian and African regions respectively, while at the Santiago conference, it was agreed upon that the target date should be 1970. However, while the Karachi Plan was solely concerned with UPE, the Addis Ababa and Santiago Plans were mainly concerned about secondary and higher levels of education.

Statistical evidence, however, shows that all the countries of the Third World could not achieve their stated goal of UPE. A study by Fredriksen indicated some progress toward UPE and that pupil enrollment at the primary level for the Third World countries increased from 116m in 1960 to 238m in 1975. The figure for Asia had gone up from 69m to 136m and for Africa and Latin America it had increased from 19m to 44m and 28m to 57m respectively. This progress is reflected in Table 1.

Table 1

Growth of Primary-School Enrollment, 1960-1975

Region	Pupils Enrolled (in millions)				Average Annual Growth Rate (%)			Increase %
	1960	1965	1970	1975	60/65	65/70	70/75	
Third World Nations	116	160	198	238	6.6	4.4	3.3	106
Africa	19	27	34	44	6.5	4.9	5.5	128
South Asia	69	96	116	136	6.9	3.9	3.3	98
Latin America	28	36	47	57	5.6	5.4	3.9	107

Source: Birger Fredriksen, "Universal Primary Education in Developing Countries: A Statistical Review" Prospects 8, No. 3 (1978).

There was a 106% overall increase among the Third World nations, where primary school enrollments rose by 44 million during the period 1960-65, 38 million between 1965 and 1970 and 40 million between 1970 and 1975. There was an apparent slowdown in enrollment growth in South Asia between 1965 and 1970 and an overall increase in the developing countries again between 1970 and 1975 caused particularly by strong enrollment growth in Africa. Except in Africa the average annual growth rates showed a decline between 1960 and 1975. The lower rate of growth in Latin America was caused by the fact that many countries of this region had already reached or were approaching universalization quite rapidly by the 1970s.

The gross enrollment ratios for the developing countries for 1970 and 1975 were 71% and 76% respectively.[20] But the net enrollment ratios for the same region were only 58% and 62% for 1970 and 1975.[21] One point worth noting is that there were increasing disparities in the growth of enrollment

ratios between different regions and even within regions. As Fredriksen pointed out, the enrollment ratio in 1960 for Latin America exceeded that of South Asia by 26% and that of Africa by 36% and in 1975 the differences became increased by 42% for both regions;[22] while within the Asian region, the Philippines exceeded in 1969 that of Afghanistan in 1970 by 87% points and that of Bangladesh by 53% points.[23]

Further, it should be noted that although some countries or regions were more advance in attaining the goal of UPE, stated increase in enrollment rates are sometimes not very reliable, since the statistics of some countries shows an enrollment ratio of over 100%. And, even if it was taken for granted that all the primary school age children of a country were in school, there would remain widespread disparities in quality and in the facilities provided in different areas, such as urban and rural, and for different classes and genders of people. Generally, by UPE it is meant 100% enrollment of children of primary school age in schools.[24] But, as the literature indicated, for someone to become literate and remain so, he/she needs at least four years of schooling--with some scholars suggesting that eight to nine years of schooling might be necessary. This would require that children not only enroll in class I, but also that they remain and attend school for sufficient number of years. However, what was actually happening in the Third World nations was that a large percentage of these children was dropping out before completing the primary school cycle. For example, for every 100 children enrolled in class I only 45 remained in class V.[25] Therefore, 100% enrollment only in class I means

very little not only in terms of attaining the literacy rate but also attaining the broad goals such as social equality to which, it was thought, education could contribute. In other words, only equality of access to primary education is not enough to guarantee the equality of process and outcomes. For this the provisions of equality of process and outcomes are also essential. However, whether UPE will contribute to attaining socio-economic equality remain a question. And, this question will be dealt in the latter part of this study. We will now turn to the case of Bangladesh during the Pakistan period.

EFFORTS IN UPE DURING PAKISTAN PERIOD 1947-1970: EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND THE PLACE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION WITHIN IT

The Pakistan Education Conference of 1947 first resolved that "free and compulsory education should be introduced for a period of five years."[26] Since that time UPE was a major goal of the nation and its planning machinery. The First Five Year Plan (1955-1960) asserted that a system of universal primary education was imperative. It was viewed as "essential to prepare citizens for the discharge of their democratic and civic responsibilities and to provide them with equal opportunities for economic and cultural advancement."[27] The Plan made a number of excellent recommendations to attain the goal of UPE. Emphasis on the enrollment of girls was to be the key focus in this direction. It was also considered that by the better distribution of primary schools, the existing inequalities in primary education would be reduced. However, stated allocation of resources in the First Plan of Pakistan seems inconsistent with the proposed objectives.

Primary education was neglected while secondary and higher levels of education received a considerable allocation of resources. As a result, no marked improvements in the quality of primary education occurred. Also, primary school enrollment did not increase to the extent expected. On the other hand, secondary school enrollment was appreciably higher and the enrollment in the colleges and universities was doubled during this period.[28]

In 1958, the Government of Pakistan appointed the Commission on National Education, which made a comprehensive report in 1959. Among other recommendations of the Commission, the introduction of UPE for the age group 6-11 by 1970 and for the age group 11-14 by 1975 was reinforced again. Although the Government expressed interest in implementing a major part of the recommendations of the Commission on Education, this was not adequately reflected in the financial allocations of the Plans. While primary education received 24% of the allocation in the Second Plan and 20% in the Third, the estimated actual expenditure at this level during the Second Plan period was only 9%. This may be compared with an estimated actual expenditure of 17% for secondary and 25% (as against an allocation of 14%) for higher education in the Second Plan. In the Third Plan 23% of the resources were allocated to secondary education and 15% for higher education. Allocation for technical education went up very substantially. It was 24% in the Second Plan and 23% in the Third Plan (it was 6% in the First Plan).

The budgetary situation of primary education for East Pakistan was more or less the same. In the Second and Third Plans, primary education

was allocated 18% and 20% respectively of the total expenditure. The allocation for secondary education increased from 19.9% in the Second Plan to 21.0% in the Third Plan. Allocation for higher education fell slightly from 21.5% in the Second to 16.2% in the Third Plan which was still very high considering the number of students involved. The allocation for technical education went up from 19.7% in the Second to 28.8% in the Third Plan, but much of it was spent on higher and diploma level of technical education to the neglect of lower levels of technical education.[29]

The large amount of allocation for secondary and higher levels of education may be said to indicate an elitist approach to education. The tendency in an unequal elitist society is to neglect primary education and favor secondary and especially tertiary education through which a relatively small number acquire the "learning" and "culture" to dominate and exploit the masses.

THE IMPACT OF DISPARITIES ON PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

There was not only disproportionate resource allocation for different levels of education, but educational resources distributed between East and West wings of the country also discriminatory. The disparities were even obvious in the resource allocations of the Development Plans. In the first two Five-Year Plans of Pakistan, the funds allocated to West Pakistan were much greater even though it had a smaller population than Bangladesh. The Central Government, which was consisted of West Pakistanis mainly, justified this discrimination on the grounds of lower absorptive

capacity of the latter for capital. To Bangladesh it was evidence of unequal bargaining power between the two wings. It was not before the Third Five-Year Plan (1965-70) that the East wing (Bangladesh) of the country was given a slight edge over the West wing in public sector allocations, when it was allocated 51% of the total development expenditure on education.[30] However, whatever resources were allocated for education in the East, the portion for primary education was nominal. This policy had an adverse effect on the development of primary education in Bangladesh during the pre-independence period. Table 2 shows the increase in enrollment which occurred at different levels of the educational system in Bangladesh from 1950 to 1972. The figures indicate the very slow rate of expansion of primary education as compared to college and university education. Between 1960-61 and 1972-73 the percentage increase in enrollment in primary schools was only 80% compared to the 600% increase both in college and university education. Table 3 which shows the primary school enrollment in Bangladesh for selective years during the Pakistan period further indicates how the primary education in Bangladesh was neglected. After 1947-48, there was even an actual decrease in the enrollment in primary schools up to 1954-55. From then on, the rate of increase was rather slow, up to at least 1960. Between 1964-65 and 1967-68, the percentage of the primary age school population enrolled in schools increased from 45.71% to 53.02%.

The sex ratios of students attending primary schools in Bangladesh improved only gradually between 1950 and 1970. However, despite the

Table 2

Development of Education in Bangladesh From 1950-72.

Level of Education	Period	% Increase in Enrollment
Primary	1950-51 to 1960-61	36
	1960-61 to 1972-73	80
Secondary	1950-51 to 1960-61	6
	1960-61 to 1972-73	219
Intermediate	1950-51 to 1960-61	185
	1960-61 to 1972-73	522
College (Degree)	1950-51 to 1960-61	180
	1960-61 to 1972-73	600
Universities	1960-61 to 1972-73	600

Source: T. Islam, An Analysis of Public Recurring Expenditure of Higher Education, Government of Bangladesh (Dacca: University Grants Commission, 1975), table 13, p. 28.

Table 3

Primary School-Age Population and Enrollment (Classes I-V) in Bangladesh for Selected Years.

Year	Population (age 6-10)	Enrollment	% Enrolled
1947-48	...	2756719	...
1949-50	...	2578387	...
1954-55	...	2728777	...
1959-60	...	3277009	...
1964-65	9097594	4158514	45.71
1967-68	9500077	5037138	53.02

Source: L. M. Sarma Roy and R. W. Schmeding, "Enrollment in M. Haque and R. W. Schmeding (eds.), The Education in East Pakistan Research Project (Dacca: IER, University of Dacca, 1970), table 1, p. 565.

improvements, only 32% of primary school enrollment in 1970 consisted of girls, who constituted 50% of the total primary school age children.[31] The slow improvement of girls' enrollment did not tie in with the professed goal of different developmental plans of Pakistan, which repeatedly indicated the importance of a rapid increase of girls' enrollment. In fact, this continued marked imbalance in enrollment between boys and girls was one of the reasons for the slow pace at which the goal of UPE was being achieved.

The total enrollment at the primary level did not provide the full picture of what was really happening at the primary school level. There were large numbers of pupils who enrolled in primary schools and then dropped out before completing the school year. The dropout rate was very high, especially in classes I and II. So the actual retention of the pupils until class V was negligible. Although there was a steady improvement in the retention rate--from around 9.7% in 1953 to 25.1% in 1965--this increased retention had had little effect on the target of UPE.

So far only a picture of the quantitative underdevelopment of primary education has been presented. As far as quality of education went, the situation was even worse. In short, it can be said that after more than a decade since the official acceptance of the goal of UPE, there was virtually very little effort made by the West Pakistani ruling group to realize this goal.

THE EMERGENCE OF BANGLADESH AND EFFORTS IN UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

A sudden military crackdown in March 1971 galvanized an East Pakistani autonomy movement into an independence struggle. In December 1971, after

a bloody and violent struggle, Bangladesh became independent. This event raised high hopes and expectations among the population. After almost twenty-five years of West Pakistani domination, the people of Bangladesh had won their independence to determine their own fate. There was no "outsider" to exploit the Bengalis culturally, economically, and politically. It was hoped that the independence would provide the nation with opportunities to shape its own economy according to its own priorities and within its own perspective. Similarly, in the education sector, literacy and mass education, which had been neglected so far, were believed to be provided for all. However, the educational situation did not change even after the liberation. On the contrary, the overall position of the country became worse than before.

A number of factors were responsible for this deterioration. One of the major ones being the devastating war with West Pakistan which dislocated not only the lives of many people but also the institutional structure of the country. Added to this there was rapid population growth, low productivity, a slow rate of the economic growth and constant political instability. Moreover, this deteriorating condition was further reinforced by the structural features which the country inherited from the colonial days. The basic features of social and economic structure inherited from the colonial and the Pakistan days were unchanged and this along with the very limited resources of a large number of people made economic progress difficult.

Economic Situation. Bangladesh is one of the poorest nations with a per capita

GNP of US $110 in 1976.[32] The total population of Bangladesh which was over 77 million in 1974 reached 93 million by 1980.[33] This large number of people squeezed into only 55,126 square miles of area made Bangladesh one of the most densely populated countries of the world. Population density per square kilometer was 558 in 1976 and average annual growth rate of total population and of urban population were 2.0% and 3.8% respectively during 1970-75 period. In 1975, 46% of population was under age 15, making the dependency rates on the working population very high.[34]

The country is overwhelmingly rural with 86% of its labor force in agriculture. The rate of unemployment in 1970s was 30% and the percentage of population of work age (15-64 years) was 49.[35] The country has very limited natural resources and a difficult terrain which is frequently ravaged by floods and cyclones. Only about one-third of the cultivated area is entirely free of floods. Of the rest, about 40% is moderately flooded to less than 3 feet and the remainder to a depth of 6 feet or more.[36]

Sixty percent of the country's GNP derived from agriculture sector of the economy. The most important agricultural products are rice and jute. In 1973-74, about 87.6% of the area cultivated was devoted to these two crops, while sugar cane (1.2%), wheat (1.1%), tea (0.4%) together accounted for an additional 5.5% of the cultivated area. The output from large and small scale industries constituted about 7.6% and 2.7% respectively of GNP of Bangladesh. The jute manufacturing industry accounted for 75% of the industrial output. Textile industries (jute and

cotton) provided the largest source of employment in the industrial sector 73%. The food and beverage (9.5%) and chemical and pharmaceutical industries (6.5%) accounted for 89% of the large scale industrial employment. Among the remainder of the industrial sector, employment provided by cottage industries accounted for more than 90% of the total employment of labor in the cottage and small scale industries combined. The majority of this was rural; in fact, 80% of the employment in these industries was in the rural areas.[37]

The country had made little progress in increasing its rate of economic growth or in relieving poverty and unemployment problems since independence. In fact, the average annual growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita during 1970-75 was -2.3% and 59% of the population was in absolute poverty (using Kravis adjustment) in 1975.[38] The situation was further aggravated by bad harvests due to unfavorable weather in 1972 and again in 1974, accompanied by floods and famine in late 1974.

It was not until 1975-76 that aggregate GDP exceeded the level of 1969-70. This was mainly due to increase in agricultural output, largely because of very good weather. However, industrial output was still lower than that of 1969-70 period. Substantial recovery took place in transport and services from the damages and destruction caused by the war.[39]

Dimension of Inequality: The country was not only poorest in terms of per capita income, but also suffered from substantial inequality in income

distribution. The richest 20% of the population received 46% of the national income in 1963-64, whereas poorest 20% received 7%. The inequality was greater in the urban areas with the rich 20% of the population receiving 57% of the total urban income. Again the average income of the urban population was about two-thirds higher than the average rural income.[40] On the whole, the large disparities in income distribution between the poor and the rich were mainly caused by the inequality in the income distribution between the modern or high wage sector and the traditional low wage sector--a feature which was predominant in nearly every Third World country.

Beside the inequalities in income distribution between urban and rural areas, there were wide disparities in the distribution of facilities between these areas. The urban sector received a disproportionately large share of public resources to provide for social and economic infrastructure, such as roads, power, water supply, sewerage, health and educational facilities and direct industrial investment. A large part of private resources originating in the rural areas had also been appropriated by the urban sector through the mechanism of "price twists" as described by Lipton.[41]

The increasing inequalities in income distribution and disparities in the social services were in fact the result of the developmental strategies the country followed since the pre-independence period. Development was mainly related to a narrow concept of materialistic and urban oriented economy and increased GNP. Efforts to develop the modern sector of the

economy at the cost of the agricultural sector was the major preoccupation of the developmental strategies of the country and reinforced the perpetuation of the existing inequalities. The urban modern sector bias in the economy also created bias in the distribution of the educational facilities for different groups of people. The educational system was geared to produce skilled middle and higher level manpower for the modern sector, while the primary level of education was neglected.

Political Situation: Within the 10 years of independence the country had changed the government five times--which indicates the degree of political instability. The coup in 1975 and the brutal assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the most popular political party, the Awami League, and subsequent coups and turmoil had devastating effects on the society and the economy. The failure of the most popular party and political leadership can be explained partly by conflicting interests of the different social groups within the party and partly by the international politics.

There were, in fact various groups which directly or indirectly influenced the socio-economic policies and strategies through their control of or influence on the political process and machinery. The most notable interest groups were the rich farmers, trading and marketing intermediaries (the mercantile class) engaged in domestic and foreign trade and small-scale entrepeneures earnestly hoping to develop into medium and large-scale industries. Also, there was industrial trade union, small but influential

as well as students though a separate category contained within themselves a wide range of ideological factions. Other were members of the public service including the army, the professionals and the intelligentia. Within these groups there were conservative and radical forces, both of which were contesting for supremacy within the Awami League. To satisfy both groups the party leadership was in an ambivalent position. As N. Islam observed:

> The leadership of the party at the ape stood in the middle and appeared not to have firm conviction of its own in either direction. It was willing to make advances towards socialistic and egalitarian policies provided there were not serious challenges by the conservative groups or vested interests. The leadership of the party opted for a continuous compromise, taking one step in one direction offset by another in the opposite direction. The leadership was in favor of keeping its options open. It could not go against the socio-economic groups which were dominant in the economy and in the organizational structure of the party.[42]

EFFORTS IN UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION SINCE 1972

A major problem in assessing the efforts in UPE in Bangladesh is that its objectives have not been made explicitly clear in the post independence period.[43] However, the constitution of Bangladesh, which was framed within a few months of the country's independence, provided some broad guidelines for educational development, and one of its expressed concerns was the universalization of primary education. The "Fundamental Principles" of the state policy as embodied in the constitution of the country laid down that the state should adopt effective measures for the purpose of:

-establishing a uniform mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children of such

stage as may be determined by law;

-relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve these needs; and

-removing illiteracy within such times as may be determined by law.[44]

The other provisions in the "Fundamental Principles" which were closely linked with educational development were:

1. The state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens.

2. The state shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man, and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and or opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic.[45]

In 1972, the Bangladesh Education Commission was set up to elaborate the basic objectives of educational development and work out a strategy for attaining its goals. The task of the Commission was to examine the educational system in detail, to make recommendations for future structure and development of the system, and to prepare a comprehensive educational plan. In May 1974, the commission submitted its report which visualized a key role for education in the reconstruction of the society, reflecting the basic principles of socialism, democracy, nationalism and secularism as outlined in the country's constitution. It was believed that education must promote moral values and serve as an instrument of social change. Further, it was suggested that in order to create an egalitarian and democratic society education must be provided to all the people according to their ability and aptitudes on the basis of equality of opportunity. Every citizen must be assured of a minimum standard of education. The education

system must also serve as a means for molding the attitudes and values of the people so as to make them agents of sustained progress and for eliminating superstition, mismanagement and corruption from social and economic systems. It was further observed that a major responsibility of the system was to increase the skill and capability of the people so that they could contribute to the social and economic advancement of the country. Further, in the new situation of an independent Bangladesh, education was viewed as essential to foster independent thinking, creativity, managerial ability and quality of leadership.[46] To attain all these goals, democratization of primary education became the major concern of the country.

EDUCATIONAL PLAN AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

The report of the Commission, which provided important guidelines for educational reform, and planning, however, available long after the preparation of The First Five-Year Plan 1973-78 of Bangladesh. In the absence of a clear directive from the Government about its educational goals, the planners (who were mainly economists) did not have much to go on.[47]

Nevertheless, a few key objectives of the education plan should be identified. They were:

i) (Education) must have relevance to future work and life, and must provide adequate preparation for productive employment.

ii) The system should produce...a cadre of skilled manpower required for development needs of the country...

iii) All citizens should have an inherent right to a minimum level of education and be able to receive it at any age convenient to them. ...All children must, however, be assured of basic formal education at least of the primary level.

iv) Educational facilities of a basic minimum standard will be available to all seats of learning regardless of whether they are located in the rural areas or in the cities and whether they are managed by the government or private individuals.

v) The educational system must do away with the strict compartmentalization of primary, secondary and higher education and instead aim at reaching a 'spectrum of education' which would be open to all through innovative measures.

vi) Education...must be able to enrich the cultural attainment of the people.[48]

Before adopting a strategy for attaining the stated objectives the Plan explained why it was impossible to follow certain model of educational planning. It stated that the social demand for education was so great that a strict application of the cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness or rate of return approach, could not be made. Also, it was difficult to draw up educational and training program strictly on the basis of manpower projection with inadequate knowledge about the exact requirements of skilled manpower in the different sectors of the economy and the precise nature of future technological transformation. It was further observed in the plan that so long as earnings of high-school and college educated youth were higher than those with only primary education and so long as the opportunities for acquiring skills outside formal schooling remained limited and social status of skilled workmen remained lower than that of college graduates, children of poor families or with limited academic promise, would continue to flock to colleges for higher education.[49]

The methodology, therefore, followed in the preparation of the plan on education was one of trend analysis. This was evident in the setting up of the targets and suggestions regarding the programs. Trends in the

past were examined and targets of future educational expansion were set on the basis of desirability in the light of overall objectives, feasibility and the so-called "social demand" for education.

Strategies: As in the case of the objectives, the strategies to achieve them were also vaguely expressed without a clear indication of priorities. The strategies included the following: improving the quality of education by making an optimum use of the number of trained teachers; strengthening science education in both schools and colleges; giving greater emphasis on vocational training; providing central laboratories and community workshops attached to schools and vocational training institutions; making higher education selective; spreading effective adult literacy; encouraging sports and cultural activities and giving special attention to female education.[50]

Primary Education: The First Plan, however, spelled out the major objectives of the country with reference to primary education. These were:

i) The total enrollment would go up to about 2.6 million from a base of 6 million to 8.5 million.

ii) The percentage of primary age-group students attending schools would increase from 58% to 73% in 1978.

iii) 90% of the boys of primary age-group would be given access to primary education during the Plan period, compared to 76% who were attending during the formulation of the Plan.

iv) Participation of girls would be accelerated. At the time of planning 40% of the girls of the primary school age group attended schools. This would have to be raised to 55% during the plan period and would lead to an increase in actual enrollment of girls in the system by 1.1 compared to 1.4 million for boys.

v) The curriculum at the primary level would be revised to make it more relevant to real life obtaining in the country.

vi) Textbooks, writings and instructional materials would be supplied to all children free of cost or at subsidized rates.

vii) Dropout rates would be reduced from 63% to 52% by undertaking supplementary and non-formal education measures such as the development of well designed education programs through radio and television. Innovative measures such as provision of feeder schools, child feeding programs, female teachers, sports and recreational facilities and synchronization of holidays with crop seasons, would be introduced to reduce dropouts between class I and class II, where the problem was more acute.

viii) Educated housewives would be encouraged to teach in primary schools.[51]

In order to achieve these objectives the Plan allocated a sum of Tk.577.22 million taka and this was followed by an allocation of Tk 223.16 million taka in the Two-Year Plan of 1978-80. The First Plan (1973-78) recognized the fact that in order to achieve the goal of UPE, enormous investment was needed for construction of additional school buildings. Program of efficient use of schools (double shift), and constructing inexpensive school buildings had been recommended in order to accommodate the projected enrollment of children.

PROGRESS TOWARD UPE

In the first four objectives of the Plan (1973-78), emphasis was mainly directed toward increasing enrollment. However, none of these targets had been realized by 1978 or 1980. If we define UPE as equality of access, process, output and outcomes for all the primary school children, the Government had failed to even fulfill the first step of the goal--that was equal access to primary education by providing enough schools. Although number of schools increased from 30,447 in 1973 to

40,445 in 1980,[52] it was too few to enroll all the children and to keep the pace with 2.0% (or 2.5%) population growth rate per annum. Further these schools were very unevenly distributed between different regions of the country. In Bangladesh, there were 68,000 villages and there was not even one primary school per village on the average. In the densely populated areas, it was physically impossible for the existing schools to accommodate all the school age children. The distance of schools in the rural areas, marginal tribal areas and the coastal islands made it impossible to attract children. Therefore, the total enrollment at the primary level increased from 6 million to 7 million only. This was estimated by the Second Five-Year Plan 1980-1985 of Bangladesh. However, according to UNESCO's statistics, the enrollment figure for 1978 was 8,312,011, which, in fact, declined to 8,219,313 by 1980. Taking into consideration of the Second Five-Year Plan's estimation, the First Plan fell far short of the projection (8.5m).

Also, there was no effective measure taken to encourage girls' enrollment. In a sex-segregated society, where girls were not allowed to attend coeducational institutions, the Government needed to provide special provision to encourage girls enrollment. Provision of increasing the female teacher and use of educated housewives as primary school teachers as was originally proposed, did not happen although the appointment of female teachers was indispensible to increase girls' attendance. The percentage of female teachers increased from 5% in 1975 (1973 percentage is not available) to 8% only in 1980.[53] The enrollment of

girls increased from 2.0 million to 2.2 million during the 1973-80 period,[54] instead of 3.1 million as projected for 1973-78 period.

It should also be remembered that in a society of scarcity, poor parents often decide to send their children to schools on the basis of the utility of schooling. The value of girls' schooling was/is less than that of boys', because girls could never be expected to contribute to the family either as a wage earner or as a worker in defense and security. Education tended to be seen as irrelevant for girls who were destined for marriage for motherhood at an early age. Although the average legal age of marriage for females was 18, girls got married soon after their puberty, especially in the rural areas. In the urban areas, the age of marriage for females was sometimes higher.[55] This pattern of early marriage which forced girls to involve themselves in household work, and the general attitude toward female education were largely responsible for the high illiteracy rate among women which also contributed to increasing the average national illiteracy rate of 77%.

One interesting fact is that although girls were the disadvantaged group in the society of Bangladesh, the daughters of rich and high status families had more opportunity to receive not only primary education but also secondary and university education. Further, they enjoyed more freedom of movement than the daughters from poorer families. Whatever representation women had even in the job market it was held by the women from rich and educated families. This indicates that the traditional view against the education of girls is confined mainly to the lower socio-economic groups. Therefore, it seems that if these groups could afford

the cost of sending their daughters along with their sons to school they would not have been very reluctant to do so.

It is apparent that it was not only the Government, who failed to provide enough facilities to enroll all the school age children, but the poor socio-economic background of the children was also largely responsible for low enrollment. Although tuition was free, parents simply could not afford the opportunity cost and other direct cost (books, uniform, etc.) of schooling of their children.[56] Even though the Plan proposed to supply textbooks, writing and instructional materials free of cost or at subsidized rates, no such measure had been taken. In fact, in 1978 the price of textbooks was increased. This together with the famine of 1974 aggravated the situation of the poor families. Therefore, during the late 1970s, enrollment, as indicated earlier, had not only stagnated but also declined. As a result, only 60% of primary school age cohort (5-9)[57] was able to enroll in school after a year latter (1981) of the target date of universal primary education.

INEFFICIENCY IN SCHOOLING: ABSENTEEISM, REPETITION AND DROPOUTS

As in the case of provision of the equality of access, the Government also failed to increase the efficiency of schooling--and, therefore, reduce the problems of repetition, dropouts and absenteeism. In Bangladesh, the factors which are responsible for low enrollments also quite often explain absenteeism, repetition and dropouts among primary school students. As indicated above, in 1981, only 60% primary school children enrolled in

schools. Of these many might have repeated and dropped out after a few months of years. Table 4 indicates the enrollment at each level of the primary school with the percentage of girls in each class for 1980.

Table 4

Enrollment in Primary Schools for Different Classes and Sexes in 1980

Class	Boys	Girls	Total	% of Girls
I	2,154,366	1,242,382	3,396,748	36.6
II	1,089,081	663,048	1,752,129	37.8
III	819,811	480,990	1,300,801	37.0
IV	626,731	371,432	988,163	37.2
V	492,042	279,430	771,472	36.2
Total	5,182,031	3,037,282	8,219,313	37.0

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1980, in E. Sattar, Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh, Table 4.1, p. 35.

Within the country, however, the class size varied with the physical condition of the regions as well as the socio-economic level of the area. The largest classes were found in the Comilla district of south Bangladesh, which was heavily populated and also well endowed with schools. The marginal tribal areas and the coastal islands had the smallest class size. The average class I size ranged from 24 in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to 84 in Comilla. However, at the beginning of the academic year, enrollment

in class I in many schools are often over 100.[58] The average number of students per class and the percentage distribution of students in each class for 1980 is given in Table 5.

The figures in the table show the heavy concentration of students

Table 5

Average Enrollment and Percentage Distribution of Enrollment Between Classes I-V 1980

Class	Average Enrollment	Percentage Distributed
I	77	41.3
II	40	21.3
III	30	15.8
IV	23	12.1
V	18	9.4

Source: E. Sattar, Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh, Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

in class I. This, in fact, indicates the real problem which Bangladesh is facing. The actual number of students enrolled in class I was 3.3 million, which was larger than the actual age cohort. This was because: i) many children enrolled at a later age and so increased the numbers in a particular class to a figure larger than the population recorded for that age cohort; ii) up to 25% of these children were enrolled for the second time and actually should have been in class II or III; iii) in most cases, the figures were inflated at least by about 20%.[59]

The percentage distribution of children in schools makes clearer the

significance of the 60% enrollment of the total primary school age children. There might indeed be an overall enrollment of 60% in schools but the majority were concentrated in the lower classes from which they later dropped out. Hence, this figure has little meaning in terms of the achievement of universal literacy. As mentioned earlier, a minimum of four or more years of primary education on a regular basis is considered essential in attaining sustained literacy. Therefore, for the attainment of literacy and universal primary education, the class V enrollment was particularly significant.

The dropouts not only represented a serious waste of resources but also made planned educational targets difficult to achieve. Dropout occurred at all levels but was very high at the primary level, especially in class I and II.[60] The official figures of dropout were, as in the case of enrollment figures, not very reliable. The First Plan of Bangladesh estimated that the dropout ratio at the primary stage was 63% in 1973. This probably meant that of all those who enrolled in class I in 1968, only 37% completed class V in 1973. Other sources indicated that in 1976 the retention rate of students at the primary school until class V was 30%, which meant that 70% dropped out before completion of the primary cycle[61] and, 58% dropped out immediately after the first year.[62] There are no data available about the dropout rate for 1980, However, these figures did not seem to change even in 1980 as the Second Five-Year Plan observed "(A)lthough the dropout rate was proposed to be reduced available indications suggest that it continues to be high."[63]

The phenomenon of a high dropout rate is not unique to Bangladesh but is also characteristic of the majority of the LDCs. In the 1960s, the percentages of dropouts at the primary level in Asia, Africa and Latin America were 20.2%, 54.0% and 61.6%, respectively.[64] This is, however, an overview of three regions, but within some countries such as in Bangladesh the wastage is very severe. In India and also in Pakistan only 20% remained in class V.[65] A study by Brimer and Pauli indicated that in Latin America during the 1950s and early 1960s dropout rates were extraordinarily high and on the average only a quarter of the children enrolled in class I reached class VI.[66]

Wastage in the education system also could occur if students, instead of dropping out altogether, attended school irregularly but were nevertheless retained on the school register. This problem of absenteeism was also closely related to dropout rates since students who were not attending school for long periods ultimately dropped out.

Similarly, repetition produced the same problems and while repeaters swelled the numbers in a class, their academic performance was not necessarily improved and they often dropped out from school. Repetition was mandatory if the children had poor attendance or performance records. The repetition rate varied among classes, e.g., while in class V, 14% of students were repeating, in class I it was 23%. Repetition among girls were slightly higher than among boys in all classes at the primary level.[67] For the Third World regions, in the 1960s, the percentage of repeaters were 10.3%, 40.7% and 5.3% for Asia, Africa and Latin America, respectively.[68]

Some of the factors which were responsible for low enrollment at the primary level have already been noted briefly above. These were also relevant in explaining the phenomena of absenteeism, dropouts and repetition. The findings of a survey, carried out in two rural areas in the Dhaka district of Bangladesh in 1970 by T. Islam, revealed that enrollment at the primary stage in a family depended mainly on family income and the occupation and level of education of the head of the family.[69] The cultivators' and handicraft workers' families had a markedly lower interest in enrolling their children in schools than those of traders and service holders. This was because the children of cultivators' and workers' families had to assist in the family occupation at an early age. Enrollment was also found to be mearkedly lower among the poorer families than among the economically better off. This was to be expected considering that children from poor families were likely to be chronically undernourished and thus in poor health and many of them were not able to afford direct costs of education. Furthermore, the opportunity costs of education among children of the poor families was not considered negligible since such families had to mobilize every member of the household in their efforts to eke out a living. Islam also found that enrollment was markedly higher where the head of the family had some education himself.

Islam's findings received strong support from an Indian study which indicated that 40% of children aged 6-11 who were not attending school were working most of the time and about 65% of the children aged 11-14 were working full time. This study further revealed that a much higher percentage of girls than boys were working.[70]

Wastage in education was also influenced by the school environment. Schools were crowded, poorly lighted and poorly constructed. The teachers were often very didactic and dictatorial in an overcrowded situation. When there is only one teacher for 70 children, especially in the lower grade, that teacher could hardly teach, except by rote and by strict discipline. Also, teachers often lacked the basic understanding about a child's psychology and maintained order and discipline by punishment, which contributed to school dropout. It was difficult for children to learn under such conditions, and they became easily discouraged and consequently dropped out. The overall enrollment at the primary level was also kept low because of the low enrollment of girls which was about half the rate for boys as a proportion of the relevant age group population.

QUALITATIVE ASPECT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

The qualitative aspect of primary education provides even a more frustrating picture. The quality of education largely depends on school factors, such as the curriculum, the instructional materials, the teachers, and the physical facilities available. In order to increase the quality of education at the primary level, it was essential to ensure that the schools were supplied with adequate educational facilities, teachers, relevant curriculum and all that these entailed. These should also be distributed equally among the various regions and segments of the population. In fact, the findings of a study conducted by Heyneman suggest that investment in such areas as better physical equipment, teachers and learning materials--the basic components of quality in schools--can be expected to

affect the academic performance of school children in developing countries.[71]

Not only do external factors affect wastage, an education which is irrelevant to the needs of people's life also facilitates repetition, dropouts and absenteeism. The majority of schools, especially those in the rural areas were able to offer only a low quality of schooling. The result was that primary school children, particularly those in the rural and marginal urban areas, had an unpleasant time at school. N. Bennett sketched a picture of a rural primary school child in a developing country by noting that:

> Typically, at the age of 5, 6 or 7 (legal age) the child will enroll in a primary school. It is likely that this school will be some distance from his home and that he will spend about seven hours in school, most of the time sitting in a crowded hot, ill-lit building. He will be taught by a teacher without much more than primary school education himself. At least half of the time will be spent on reading (reciting after the teacher), writing (copying from the board) and arithmetic (copying and reciting)...There might also be some work on a school garden, and lectures and recitation in geography, history and general science.[72]

This is in reality a description of the situation of Bangladesh. Therefore, as Dove points out with reference to Bangladesh, "children find school uninteresting and their teacher harsh. Poor parents see schooling as costly and irrelevant to the survival needs of the family."[73]

THE PROBLEM OF INEQUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

If one examines the enrollment targets set for the expansion of education and the resource allocation made for different levels and types

of education in the First Plan, one will get some ideas of the educational priorities that were established when the Plan was first drawn up. The Plan envisaged an expansion of enrollment at the primary level by 43%, at the secondary level by 57%, at the college level by 52% and at the university level by 63%. Teacher education was to be expanded by a hefty 150% and technical education by 172% over the plan period. Table 6 indicates the targets of the First Plan of Bangladesh in the field of education and training.

Table 6

Targets for Different Levels of Education in the First Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh, in lakh and Percentage

Levels	Stock in June, 1972	Stock in July, 1978	Percentage Increase	Percent of Total Student Enrollment	Percentage of the Age Group
Primary	60.00	85.95	43	72.4	73
Secondary	17.00	26.62	57	22.5	23.5
Teacher Education	0.10	0.25	150	0.2	
College	3.28	5.00	52	4.2	
Technical Education	0.18	0.49	172	0.4	
Universities	0.24	0.39	63	0.3	

Source: Bangladesh, First Five-Year Plan, p. 450.

In terms of financial allocation, the percentage of development funds earmarked for primary education in the Plan was 18.78 of the total against 19.49% for secondary, 8.04% for college, 11.39% for University education, 5.21% teacher education, and 16.27% for technical education. These

percentage of resource allocations are taken from the Second Plan (1980-85) of Bangladesh. The percentages in the First Plan are slightly different which raised considerable confusion. In order to avoid further confusion, I have taken the resource allocation figures from the Second Plan, which provides also a broader picture of whole period of 1973-80.

In the Plan, both college and university education together were allocated significantly more resources than primary education which was quite contrary to the observation made in the introductory paragraphs which stated that during the Pakistan period too much emphasis was given on higher education at the expense of primary education.[74] Despite all the criticism made in the Plan about the past educational strategies, the First Plan of Bangladesh followed the old elitist model in its allocation of resources to the different levels of education sector. Therefore, it became impossible to achieve the goal of UPE by 1980 which was a major ambition of the country.

But, the First Plan of Bangladesh did give a higher priority to the education sector in terms of resource allocation than the Plans of Pakistan. This was largely because investment in education as in the other social sectors in Bangladesh's First Plan was decided "exogenously," i.e., on the basis of socio-political consideration.[75] Therefore, while during Pakistan period education sector received 5% to 6% of public sector development allocations, it was 8% in the First Plan of Bangladesh.[76]

A short-fall in resources, however, developed quite early in the Plan

due to unsatisfactory economic progress, unexpected increases in current expenditure and other factors such as deterioration in the country's international terms of trade and reduction in the flow of external assistance below projected levels.[77] Husain maintained that less than 10% of the total allocation was spent in the first two years of the Plan period. For the last three years of the five-year period a hardcore plan was prepared amounting to only Tk 1,700 million. This allocated 17.7% of the total funds to primary education, 14.7% to secondary and 5.9% to teacher education. The share reserved for college education was 10.6%, for university education 18.2%, and for technical education 11.8%. Ironically, with the short fall of resources college and university levels of education had even received a greater proportion of resources than before. On the other hand, allocation for non-formal education was reduced to half the previous amount on a proportional basis.[78]

Table 7 provides the total Plan allocations during First Five-Year Plan and Two-Year Plan (1978-80) for education. The total allocation was Tk.45,400.52 lakh (30,730.20+14,670.32). The actual allocations, however, amounted to Tk.28,952.36 lakh which constituted 63.77% of the Plan allocation. This indicates that the development plan itself was not a real plan. It might be called as process since there was some other planning went on to distribute the actual allocations of resources rather than the plan allocation.

However, the major objectives of the First Plan, even when followed by the Two-Year Plan of 1978-80, had not been realized at the primary level. During the periods of two plans which lasted from 1973 to 1980, the universities were allocated a total of 571.57 million takas, but the actual expenditures

Table 7

Allocation and Expenditure During the First Five-Year and Two-Year Plan (1973-80)

(figures in lakh taka)
(10 lakh = 1 million)

Levels of Education	Plan Allocation and Percentage						Actual Allocation	Actual Expendi.	col.9 as %of col.	col.9 as %of col.8
		%	TYP	%	Total	%				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Primary Education	5772.20	18.78	2231.63	15.28	8003.83	17.63	3680.45	3411.38	42.62	92.69
Secondary Education	5988.00	19.49	2876.93	19.61	8864.93	19.53	3505.28	3011.09	33.97	85.90
College Education	2470.00	8.04	1384.93	9.44	3854.93	8.49	1717.92	1475.39	38.27	85.88
Teacher Education	1600.00	5.21	1223.54	8.34	2823.54	6.22	1018.13	792.14	28.05	77.80
Other Educational Activities (DPI)	1460.00	4.21	394.63	2.69	1854.63	4.08	4938.39	4799.33	258.78	97.19
Technical Education	5000.00	16.27	3863.30	26.33	8863.30	19.52	5950.56	4707.25	53.11	79.11
University Education	3500.00	11.39	2215.72	15.10	5715.72	12.59	6910.88	6830.38	119.50	98.84
Ministry of Education's Own Schemes	4940.00	16.07	479.64	3.28	5419.64	11.94	1230.75	858.48	15.84	69.75
Total	30730.00	100.00	14670.32	100.00	45400.52	100.00	28952.36	25885.50	57.20	89.41

Source: Bangladesh, Planning Commission, Second Five-Year Plan 1980-1985(Draft). Dacca, May, 1980, Table 16.1.

on them was more than 119% of that figure--i.e., 683.03 million. By contrast, primary education was allocated a total of 800.38 million but spent a mere 42.6% of the total--only 341.13 million takas. If one considers the differences in the number of students and institutions involved--these allocations represent an extraordinary misallocation. One interesting figure in the Table 7 is the resource allocation for "other education activities." During two plan periods only 185.46 million taka, which was 4.08% of the total allocation, was allocated to this field. But the actual expenditure was 258.78% more than that figure that was 479.93 million taka. This "other educational activities" does not provide any clue of what it was. However, the resource allocation on the whole indicates that inspite of all the rhetoric universities which provided education for the elites have been favored.

Husain pointed out that there was little information in the "Annual Plans" of the Government of Bangladesh beyond the actual expenditure to be made in the following year. Even an estimate of the actual expenditure for the previous year by total and by sub-sector was lacking. Therefore, on the basis of partial data, Husain concluded that the total development expenditure on education over the Plan period (1973-78) hardly amounted to a third of the original allocations. Also, very little information about the actual achievement of targets was provided, except some progress in the construction of buildings with some information on what was expected in the following year. Sometimes information or anticipated increase of enrollment at different levels of education was provided and often the rates were indicated in such a way that one suspects that there was always

an upward bias in the estimates of enrollments at the primary level of education.[79]

It was stated that originally when the Plan was being prepared, only a limited growth in the enrollment in the colleges and universities was proposed, especially in the field of liberal arts and humanities. However, concessions had to be made to political pressures and the targets set for this level of education were substantially revised upwards, despite the fact that according to the Plan, the expansion of university education provided for, was already considered excessive. The result was that in the course of the implementation of the Plan, the rate of expansion at the university level was accelerated far above the target originally set. It was reported that in the first year of the plan period alone the entire target for the five-year period was achieved.[80]

Furthermore, it was decided to finance the entire cost of the privately funded colleges, many of which were liberal arts or general science colleges and were previously only been partially financed by the Government. This decision was another important step towards the further expansion of public expenditure on higher education.[81]

Therefore, the years since independence have seen remarkable growth in general university enrollment. The growth rate was almost 25 percent during 1970-73 as compared to 10 and 18 percent during 1960-65 and 1965-70, respectively.[82] While there was no such data available for secondary and primary levels of education for the same period, some other study indicates that while between 1960-61 and 1974-75 enrollments at the primary level increased at a compound rate of 6.7% per annum, enrollment at secondary

level showed a growth of 11.2% and at the higher secondary and college levels it was 15.2%. For the same period, enrollment in the universities increased by 15.8% per annum.[83]

An important point is that in Bangladesh higher education, especially university education, is highly subsidized and the extent of subsidy had been increasing over time. Government Grants-in-Aid to the general universities as a percentage of university total revenue had increased to 82% in 1972-73 from 53% in 1960-61; there was a corresponding decline in the percentage contribution of student fees to 15% in 1972-73 from 37% in 1960-61. Public subsidy had been remarkably higher for the Engineering University (95% in 1972-73) and Agricultural University (86% in 1972-73). Only 2% of the recurring expenditures of the Engineering and Agricultural Universities in 1972-73 was financed by student fees. Further, on a net basis, the contribution of a student towards financing university education would range from zero to negative if inflows from students (student fees) were adjusted for expenditure on scholarship and stipends. It should be noted that almost 3% of the university current budget was disbursed on scholarship and stipend. This pattern of subsidizing university education in Bangladesh was quite striking if one compares it with some other countries. For example, in the U.S.A. students fees amounted to 22% of university income, 27% in Canada, 20% in Columbia and 8% in the U. K. during the 1960s.[84]

Public expenditure on higher education was justified by the general argument that it ensured equality of opportunity to all social classes by permitting all able and talented persons of whatever social background to rise in the social ladder. In fact, evidence shows that subsidy to higher education generally benefited students from middle and upper income

groups who had the easiest access to higher education.[85] And the dominant group quite effectively used an allegedly "meritorcratic" educational system to reproduce from generation to generation their high representation in the most lucrative jobs.[86] Therefore, financing higher education generously favored those from the upper social strata at the expense of the poorer in an emerging country like Bangladesh.[87]

Consequently, the children from lower income groups could not even enroll at the lower level of the educational system and if they did enroll many dropped out before completing the cycle. Myrdal made the same observation in the case of South Asian countries in general: "Generally children from the most disadvantaged families are less well represented" in the educational system.[88] Even at the "early stage of education, a severe process of selection is at work, which, on the whole, excludes the less privileged population groups"[89] from the education system. Similarly, as Mahalanobis observed in his writing about India where some of the characteristics of selection to university are not very dissimilar from Bangladesh, "the process of selection, on the basis of income of the parents, continues at all levels of higher education. ...By and large, it is rich people who have the opportunity of giving their children the type of education required for posts of influence and responsibility in the country."[90] Naik similarly pointed out that "Educational development particularly at the secondary and higher stages, is benefiting 'haves' more than 'have-nots.' This is a negation of social justice..."[91]

In Bangladesh, though the majority of the population was not provided

with minimum basic education, still emphasis on the expansion of secondary and higher levels of education has continued into the 1970s. On the other hand, although primary education was nationalized in 1973, it did not receive any real attention and while its financial allocation was consistently underspent, those of the universities were always overspent.[92]

EXPLANATION FOR THE FAILURE OF THE TARGET OF UPE

The foregoing discussion revealed that the government had failed to fulfill the target of UPE by 1980. But, the crucial question arose as to why the target of UPE failed. Why there was inefficiency in the educational system, especially at the primary level? The explanation lies in the fact that the upper and middle class parents wanted a certain type of education for their children which would prepare them to climb the next step of the educational ladder. So primary schools were organized to provide the type of education which will get the children to the secondary schools which in turn were geared to the universities. Bacchus expressed the same view in the case of other developing countries when he stated that the "distorting influence which the universities exert on the whole educational system persists despite the fact that often not more than 1% of the students who initially enter primary schools even end up at universities."[93]

On the other hand, there was no great effort made to provide the type of knowledge and skills needed by the majority of the students who

entered primary schools and were likely to end up earning their living from the traditional low wage sector. The sources of inefficiency in the primary education system were previously mentioned. But it cannot be denied that this situation occurred because the education system was controlled by the same group of people who controlled the means of production and the state apparatus. This small group of people always made the decisions about who gets what. This, perhaps, also explains why there are rich and poor and why poor children in Bangladesh cannot even complete the primary school course.

It was often indicated that much of what happened in the educational system in Bangladesh was the result of a lack of financial resources or of inefficiency in the educational system itself in particular. While the claim of lack of resources was partially true, the evidence suggested that even within this resource constraints secondary and higher education were favored to the neglect of primary education. Therefore, it is apparent that it was not the lack of resources as such, rather the politics of the powerful elite groups who were able to compete for valued resources such as education. These groups preferred the expansion of the secondary and tertiary levels of education for their own interests.

However, it was not only the elites who wanted to expand the secondary and higher levels of education. There were also the rising middle class and upwardly aspiring working class groups from the urban centres, who had strong influence in the decision making process. These latter groups viewed education as the only means of providing their children with an

opportunity for upward mobility through a relatively highly rewarding modern sector job.[94] Since the modern sector jobs required individuals with certain levels of education, the demand for secondary and tertiary levels continued strongly and met at the cost of primary education for the masses. While the ultimate decision rested on the highest decision making body, the Government and its highest bureaucrates, the pressure of the middle class and upper class could not be over-emphasized since the elected Government had to depend largely on political support of these groups. Therefore, secondary and higher levels of education expanded far beyond the expected target of the Government. Even when resources were allocated for primary education, these were always underspent, while the allocation for higher education were always overspent.

On the other hand, the vast majority of the less articulate masses who lived from hand to mouth entrust low value on education relative to other goods and therefore did not enter the competition for it. There was virtually no pressure from below from these less powerful rural population for the expansion of schooling. Consequently, as Dove indicated, while the policy makers adopted goals for educational development which appear to favor the masses, the process of implementation was vitally affected by the power of the small group of people who entered the political arena and competed for educational goods. Therefore, when policy aims were expressed in favor of the masses, they were implemented in favor of the few.[95] In fact, the politically powerful groups in Bangladesh, as in other developing countries,[96] dominated and exploited the masses for

their own interests and there was little or no effort made to eliminate the inequalities in the society. Education was in fact being used to perpetuate and increase the existing inequalities. As a result, poverty persists and inequalities and injustice remain the cruel reality of an increasing number of impoverished individuals, especially in the rural areas.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

There are many different kinds of suggestions from the scholars how to materialize the goal of UPE in the Third World countries. In fact, many of them provide suggestions about how to restrict the expansion of secondary and higher levels of education and therefore, to release scarce resources, which can be applied at the primary level. Suggestions of these kinds can run into volumes.

Arguments may be raised about expanding all three levels of education simultaneously. But, in Bangladesh, as in other developing countries, this is not financially possible since many of these countries are already allocating a large amount of their scarce resources to education and there are other social and economic problems which cannot be ignored.

It was observed that one of the factors which impeded the achievement of UPE in Bangladesh was poverty of the masses. The majority of the families was so poor that they could not bear the direct as well as the opportunity cost of sending their children to school. Therefore, another observation was that if the equality of educational opportunity was to be

effectively pursued, provisions for helping the poorer families to meet the direct and opportunity costs must be made.[97] Although these humanitarian concerns are important and such affirmative action as proposed might increase enrollment ratios in the primary level, the question is: "will it be possible to eliminate or even substantially reduce the existing inequalities in income distribution and the rigidities of the class structure by introducing such measures?"

The World Bank sector policy paper provides some further suggestions pertaining to the implementation of UPE by arguing that the problems of education such as inefficiency and inequality in educational opportunities are the result of mismanagement and planning, misallocation of scarce resources and the inaccessibility of better educational techniques. Thus, it was believed that improved quality of schooling can occur with good management of educational systems, and shifting the allocation of educational expenditures to the disadvantaged (rural and marginal urban) areas will increase the productivity of the educational system and promote equal income distribution, employment opportunity, equality and finally UPE. The assumption was that poverty, inequality and unemployment were the result of social and economic mismanagement or simply lack of resources. With educational expansion and improvement, the worst of a society's social, economic and political ills could be cured. However, this assumption failed to realize that even the provision of more resources to the education sector and better management will not solve social and economic problems such as inequality and unemployment--which were the

main sources of the educational problems.

There was also a recommendation to help the disadvantaged children. It was suggested that they should be provided with additional compensatory educational and social experiences to overcome their deficiencies.[98] To some extent, this proposal was tried out in the USA in the 1960s. It provided for the very young the Head Start program which placed emphasis on improving the skills of preschool youngsters from low income families in order to prepare them for entry into primary education. At the primary and secondary levels, compensatory education programs for disadvantaged children were also launched, and billions of dollars were spent on these efforts. However, according to the available evidence they culminated in massive failure.[99]

To achieve UPE in Bangladesh, suggestions were also made to use the religious schools, which form a parallel education system in the country and make a significant contribution to education at the primary level. Although there are no statistics available concerning the percentage of primary school age group children in the madrashas (religious schools), it seems that many parents with a traditional outlook desired a religious schooling for their children. Therefore, if these schools were strengthened and well supported, they could be more effectively utilized to aid the drive for UPE.[100] In this connection, there is an example of another Third World country worth citing. In the Muslim dominant part of Nigeria where the attitudes and views of parents and society about girls' education were almost similar to those in Bangladesh, a study indicated that parents

were more willing to allow their daughters attend the traditional religious schools rather than western formal schools. Therefore, in traditional religious schools (Islamiyya), female enrollments were usually higher than male enrollments.[101] In fact, the religious schools were the only institutions which provided education to many girls who would otherwise not have been permitted to attend schools. Bangladesh, it is suggested, could try a similar strategy in order to encourage girls' education. However, although these religious schools can provide some literacy or increase the numbers receiving primary education, these schools will remain unattractive and socially "second class" to many children and parents.

Since 1970, international agencies such as the World Bank and UNESCO also have been very concerned about the past developments in education and its consequences in the Third World countries. They have started making suggestions to the governments of these countries about exploring alternative approaches in education in order to overcome the problems which they face in their efforts to move towards UPE. Both the World Bank and UNESCO contended that in an over-populated Third World country where it is financially not feasible to implement UPE, especially in rural areas, universal basic education as an alternative to UPE should be given the highest priority in educational policy.[102]

Basic education means formal primary education as well as non-formal education established in a complementary relationship with each other to enable the entire population to attain the primary level of education in the shortest possible time. As the World Bank Education Sector Working paper observed:

> Basic education is an attempt...to meet the needs of substantial portions of the population who do not have access to even minimum educational opportunities. It is a supplement, not rival, to the formal education system, and is intended to provide a functional, flexible and low-cost education for those whom the formal system cannot yet reach or has already passed by.[103]

Similarly, Phillips defined basic education as both primary education in school, especially the elementary part of the cycle, and recuperative action through non-formal education for youths who missed the necessary formal schooling. Basic education is the minimum set of learning needs which individuals have for functioning effectively in their societies.[104] Phillips, in fact, offered advice for achieving UPE by suggesting fifty-four measures.[105] These measures were subdivided into broad categories, such as planning and finance/population coverage, educational organization, teachers, content, curricula, methods, research and development, and administration. He, however, admitted that the list was by no means exhaustive nor prescriptive but rather represented a set of pointers, out of which might be drawn guidance relevant to a specific situation of an individual developing country. Inherent in his 54 points was the notion of "alternatives"--alternatives in the sense of supplementary strategies which would render existing systems more effective.

However, it was also recognized by the economists and planners that educational reforms alone would not bring development to the Third World countries. For this, a new development strategy would simultaneously be required, which would remove urban bias in development and would focus on the development of the total population aimed at improving the general

standard of living of those at the bottom of the economic and social strata. While there is no intention here to suggest elaborate development strategies, which are, of course, the domain of economists and planners, a few points need mentioning to give an overall idea. First, there should be an increase in the supply of urban and rural job opportunities. For this, Todaro suggested that the governments of LDCs should:

1. reduce factor-price distortions to the extent that these enter into employment decisions in both public and private sectors;
2. give more careful consideration to improving rural infra-structure and to the possible location of new modern-sector activities in areas where wages have not yet reached the distorted levels typical of established urban centres;
3. allocate a larger share of public budgets to productive employment-creating activities and less to educational expansion than has been the pattern in the past.[106]

Bacchus maintains that development strategy should involve a fuller utilization of locally available resources in all production efforts. In short, development strategy should gear to a strategy for self-reliant development by using more appropriate (labor intensive) technology and a production orientation geared mainly towards meeting domestic consumption needs. While these LDCs must continue to produce export goods to secure foreign exchange to purchase those essential imports which they cannot produce for themselves, their main concern should be meeting the local needs rather than producing goods for exports.[107]

However, any such strategy for rural Bangladesh would initially appear to go against the interest of the urban dwellers. There is, however, no inconsistency in the long run between the interest of the rural and the urban areas because, if the income levels of 90% of the population who live in the rural areas are improved, it will result in an overall increase in the demand for the products of the rural as well urban areas. Indeed a successful policy of mass development cannot fail to benefit urban areas as well. The removal of various price distortions and the adoption of appropriate technology will create more jobs and growth for both rural and urban populations. Therefore, the urban economy will have a sound economic base in the future and will not grow on the basis of the "push factors" promoting rural-urban migration caused by impoverishment of the rural masses.[108]

A viable strategy of rural and mass biased development and full employment would ease the problem of educational planning and development. However, it will still be important to formulate appropriate policies in the field of education and training. In fact, there should be a strong link between overall development planning and educational planning. With a large expansion of agricultural and rural based development, which has so far been neglected in Bangladesh, there will be an increased requirement for a wide-range of skill training for the lower as well as middle level personnel. While most of this training should be organized on-the-job, a sound basic education for both children and adults seems to be a most viable measure for initial understanding and acquiring relevant life skills. In fact, the

concept of universal basic education for the LDCs became a popular notion in the 1970s in order to achieve the goals of UPE, equality of opportunity, elimination of urban-rural bias and disparities, and overcoming of poverty and underdevelopment. Basic education, which is functionally defined as "minimum learning needs" for individuals, is viewed as a threshold level of learning required for participation in economic, social and political activities.

CAN REFORM IN EDUCATION AND UPE HELP IN BRINGING ABOUT GREATER SOCIO-ECONOMIC EQUALITY?

The international consensus about the need for minimum basic education seems to have an immense effect on Bangladesh as well. In 1980, the President and Government of Bangladesh again expressed commitment to the achievement of UPE. By 1985, the country intends to enroll 90% of the primary school age group children in classes I to V.[109]

The seriousness of the intention by the Government to provide functional literacy for adults and increased access to basic education for all children is evident in the resource allocation in the Second Five-Year Plan (1981-85) of Bangladesh. In this Plan, for the first time, conventional educational priorities have been revised by allocating 53% of the sum earmarked for education to the development of primary and mass education. Strong emphasis has been given to UPE programs which indicates the country's clear commitment to principles of basic human rights, social justice, equality of opportunity and efficiency.[110]

The main aims of the Second Plan (1981-85) are: 1) to widen the base

of educational system by introducing universal primary education; 2) to link education to employment; 3) to accelerate the increase of women's education; 4) to reduce the rural-urban gap in educational provision; and 5) to introduce selectivity in higher education.[111] It is also indicated in the Plan that since resources are limited, there cannot be a simultaneous increase in public expenditure at all the levels of education. It is felt necessary to economize in all other sectors of education through confining higher education only to the meritorious, increasing the efficiency of prevailing institutions by making the private sector pay more of the cost of higher education.

Education was viewed as the key to survival, social justice, political viability and eventually economic self-reliance for a country whose major resource is its 90 million people. UPE is seen as a necessary condition for enabling the mass of the population to participate in the development activities. As stated in the Plan:

> It is considered that the objectives of attaining a better quality of life for the masses can be realized better if the population is literate. The ability to read and write is an important asset for man in modern life. It helps in the efficient use of modern inputs in farming, transaction of business with banks, cooperatives or land administration, use of family planning devices and finally, and above all, in the use of democratic rights of citizens. Universal primary education is indeed a pre-condition of modernization. Removing illiteracy from the country is, therefore, considered as a strategy for social and economic development of the masses.[112]

World Bank, which has committed itself to support low-cost basic education and rural training for low-income countries like Bangladesh,

has agreed to help the Bangladesh Government to achieve the target of UPE by 1985. At present, the Bank is assisting the country with a soft loan to launch UPE in 40 thanas out of 473 thanas (local administrative units). It should be mentioned that the Second Plan of Bangladesh indeed acknowledges the almost desperate need to decentralize the administration of education especially for primary education.

The objectives of the World Bank project reflects the intentions of the Government of Bangladesh to improve the quality as well as quantity of primary education. The objectives are:

1. to provide expanded educational opportunities for universalizing primary education;
2. to increase primary school enrollment, particularly of girls;
3. to decrease wastage caused by dropouts and repetition;
4. to improve the quality of instruction and hence the level of achievement of the pupils;
5. to reduce unit cost.[113]

In the 40 thanas, which represent the most backward areas of the country with below average literacy, female enrollment, trained teachers and retention rate, there are 4033 schools, 736,000 enrolled pupils and 16,800 teachers. The total primary school age population is about 1.8 million.[114]

Although it seems that the Second Plan is clearer about the objectives of UPE, the statements are quite similar to those made in the pre-independence development plans of Pakistan and the First Plan (1973-78) of Bangladesh.

The only difference was that the resources allocated in the Second Plan of Bangladesh for primary and mass education were of a larger amount than before.[115] The underlying idea of the World Bank (IDA) project is apparent from its objectives. It is to improve the quality of education and to ensure that it be distributed more equally within the context of a society where marked social inequalities have persisted. The assumption is that by correcting inefficiency and expanding and improving educational facilities, some of the ills of the socio-economic system can be cured.

Indeed it is too early to evaluate and comment on the implementation of the Second Plan and the IDA project or even to speculate about their likelihood of success. But it is clear that these assumptions tend to overlook the fact that a significant part of these problems stems from the development pattern followed by Bangladesh. Rather than getting into the root of the problems, the country and the World Bank are dealing with the symptoms. Thus, a great influx of resources in primary education and improved management techniques will not solve social and economic inequalities. These are the attributes of the development pattern itself.[116] The education system and the social-economic system are the product of the present organization of production and the social class structure emanating from it. The educational problems are not the results simply of the lack of financial resources or the general inefficiency of the educational system as such. Therefore, educational reforms to equalize educational opportunity will have little or no impact on the income

distribution or the existence of poverty. In fact, educational reform to equalize educational attainments would not change these basic realities of the economy. To do this other more crucial measures are required.

Furthermore, although it is yet to be seen, there is some doubt that basic education will be successfully implemented. First, the power elites will resist any change, including the universalization of primary education, if they have to give up their interests for the benefits of the masses. This is because an educational system, which is more relevant to the needs of the rural masses and which may result in increasing their efforts to improve their economic situation and lead a better life, may adversely affect the privilege positions enjoyed by the few elites.

Secondly, since basic primary education, which the Government intends to introduce in Bangladesh, has to compete with formal education, it will always remain as "second class" education for the poor while formal education will, especially at the higher levels, always remain the preserve of the elites. Further, higher socio-economic groups will continue to send their children to formal schools thereby securing the benefits which are likely to accrue to them by obtaining employment in the modern sector, where formal educational credentials will still be more highly valued than any alternative "second class" education. In fact, for this reason, even the masses are not likely to support any alternatives to the formal western type of education for very long. Traditional formal education will continue to be seen by them as the only avenue through which their children can escape from the rural poverty-stricken life which they have lived,

and improve their living conditions by acquiring better employment opportunities in the urban centres.

In other words, parental preference for formal education will continue even though much of it remains "irrelevant" to the real life needs of the majority of the rural population. This choice is likely to persist because the financial benefits accruing from formal education certificates will continue to be substantially higher than that from non-formal basic education. Therefore, what is needed is not only to implement rural biased developmental strategy as mentioned earlier, but also to reduce the income gap between traditional and modern sector employment. In fact, if the income gap between these two sectors do not decrease, basic non-formal and formal education will remain as dual systems mirroring the labor market of the country.[117] The graduates from these two kinds of institutions will receive different levels of rewards in accordance with their educational credentials which will prepare them for entry either into the traditional low paid or the modern high paid sector of the economy. As Bacchus rightly argued, unless there is a drastic structural transformation in the reward system of the developing societies, non-formal (or any other alternative) education will remain as a mere peripheral activity in the field of education and never be fully accepted by the general population.[118] Therefore, rather than equalizing and eliminating disparities, universalizing basic education will still continue to reinforce inequality because it will in fact reinforce a dual system of education.

In conclusion, it can be said that in order to overcome the educational

underdevelopment and to realize the broad goals of education, a fundamental change in socio-economic structure is essential in Bangladesh. Without a drastic change in social, political and economic system any educational reform is bound to be frustrating in terms of achieving goals such as equality. And, if the socio-economic structure remains the same and perpetuates inequalities in the society, then why bother about democratization of education or any other educational reform?

References and Footnotes

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82. T. Islam, An Analysis of Public Recurring Expenditure of Higher Education in Bangladesh (Dacca: University Grants Commission, 1975), p. 17.

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84. T. Islam, An Analysis of Public Expenditure, pp. xv, 83. For detailed discussion see Chapter VII.

85. The findings of T. Islam's study indicated that most of the students came from families where the parents' guardians' income was 10 thousand taka. But about 56% of the total students came from middle and upper middle income groups (income 10.000 to 50.000 taka per annum). Further, the majority of the students came from families where the head of the families' main source of occupation was non-agriculture. See ibid., Chapter V.

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97. T. Islam, Social Justice, p. 61. M. Todaro in his Economic Development in the Third World (London: Longman, 1977) also made a similar suggestion for subsidizing the able poor in the primary level.

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107. M. K. Bacchus, Educational Research and Training for Self-Reliant Development (Unpublished Keynote Address to the INTRA/ACP Seminar, Brussels, Belgium, 1981), pp. 8-9.

108. See for more detailed discussion on how to implement a new development strategy in Bangladesh, Husain, Educational Development and Reform, Chapter VII.

109. Linda Dove, "How the World Bank can Contribute to Basic Education Given Formal Schooling will not Go Away," Comparative Education 17, No. 2 (June, 1981).

110. Government of Bangladesh, The Second Five-Year Plan (1981-85), Education Section.

111. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

112. Ibid., pp. II-10.

113. Directorate of Primary and Mass Education, "Project Summary," Universal Primary Education (IDA) Project (Dacca: Unpublished material, n.d.); Also see L. Dove, Teacher Training for UPE in Bangladesh, 1981-86 (Unpublished mimeograph, University of London, London Institute of Education), p. 4

114. Dove, ibid.

115. It should be noted here that in the First Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh whatever resource was allocated to primary education was not spent, on the other hand, resources for higher education were overspent. So it is doubtful and too early to comment whether or not the allocated resource will be spent on primary and mass education.

116. See for similar view M. Carnoy, Education for Alternative Development.

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